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CHIPEWYANS TURN CREE:
GOVERNMENTAL AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS IN ETHNIC PROCESSES[1]

Patricia A. McCormack
Department of Anthropology
University of Alberta

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Introduction

The Chipewyan and Cree Indians of northern Canada are known to have been traditional enemies. They have a history of contact and interaction that predates the fur trade and that has usually been described as hostile. In fact, the Chipewyan word for Cree is ena, "enemy."

This enmity and its underlying ethnic differentiation lingered well into the 20th century in the Fort Chipewyan and Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP) region of northeastern Alberta. Historic and ethnographic evidence indicates that the Chipewyans and Crees who settled there in the late 18th and early 19th centuries have maintained their ethnic discreteness over a lengthy period of contact with one another. The distinction was formalized in 1899, when Chipewyans and Crees signed Treaty No. 8 and became members of separate bands, both centered in Fort Chipewyan. Yet in 1944 or possibly early 1945, a sizeable portion of the Chipewyan band, those members living in WBNP, was quietly removed from the Chipewyan band list and added to the Cree band list. Legally, they became Cree Indians. In this paper I will examine the historical dimensions of Chipewyan and Cree ethnicity in order to explain this apparently anomalous transfer and its consequences. More broadly, this consideration of ethnic interrelations is "...necessarily a study of ethnic processes: that is the emergence, continuation, and change of inter-ethnic relations" (Knutsson 1969:99).

Despite the large area and number of communities in which Chipewyan and Cree now interact and co-reside - from Churchill, Manitoba in the east to WBNP and Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, in the west - the dynamics of their interaction remain largely unknown. Most research has focused on one group or the other as a cultural unit, or on some other research dimension, rather than on the boundary between them, the ethnic interface. This approach may have been a reasonable one during the early historic period, when Chipewyans and Crees seem to have contrasted culturally, from their different adaptive strategies and languages to the minutiae of different clothing styles.[2] Even then, however, certain structural features were probably common to both groups, including kinship system, political structure, emphasis on personal autonomy and self-reliance, and many items of technology. The strong cultural contrast between Chipewyan and Cree is not paralleled in similarly strong distinctions between Chipewyan and other neighboring Dene and between Cree and other Algonkians. In these instances, ethnicity may have been more a matter of "...self-ascription and ascription by others" than one of sharing a common culture (Barth 1969:13).

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Chipewyan-Cree Cultural Convergence

Whatever the early cultural differences between Chipewyan and Cree, the involvement of both in the fur trade led to cultural convergence in material culture, adaptive strategy, relationships with European traders, and cosmology. Members of both groups were eager to obtain metal products and other trade goods. The consequent dependence on European-controlled means of production led to increasing dependence on the traders themselves and ultimately the loss of Indian political autonomy.

Because the Chipewyan transitional forest habitat was not rich in furs, those Chipewyans who wanted to trap had to move south into the true boreal forest, the territory of the Crees to the south and the Beaver to the west. This move was encouraged by the fur traders and probably facilitated by Cree depopulation in the 1781 smallpox epidemic. They reached their southern limits of penetration by the mid-1790s (Gillespie 1975:368-383). Such territorial relocation meant abandoning their traditional adaptive strategy of following the barren-ground caribou and adopting a new strategy similar to that of the Crees, based on the more solitary mosse and other boreal forest fauna.[3] For the Chipewyan, such a strategy was linked directly with the availability of trade items, including guns (cf. Gillespie 1975:370). Also, marriages between Chipewyan women and trading post personnel may have encouraged this relocation: many of the Chipewyan who appear to have committed themselves to a true boreal forest existence in the Fort Chipewyan region have a European or Métis ancestor.

Initially, the fur trade caused an intensification of apparently traditional raiding practices between Chipewyan and Cree. Overt hostilities were ended both by the traders' direct peace-making efforts and by the expansion of the trading post network into the interior (Gillespie 1975:360-362). The post-1821 consolidation of the Hudson Bay Company trade encouraged Indians to trade with only one post, as part of the development of individualized, formal debt relations between Indians and traders, structuring similar Cree and Chipewyan participation in the fur trade.

Finally, the coming of Oblate missionaries to the region in 1847 and later resulted in most Indians quickly incorporating a Roman Catholic cosmology into their cultural systems, partially replacing traditional belief systems (Scollon and Scollon 1977:34).

The ethnic picture in the Fort Chipewyan region is complicated by the presence of a large Métis population, initially with Red River and French affiliations and later, Scottish, as well as a movement into the area in the late 1910s and early 1920s by Métis from the Lac La Biche area of Alberta. There is also a non-

Native component, numerically important especially after World War II. The Scollons have suggested that the process of cultural convergence summarized above, together with the interaction of the Métis and non-Native groups, by the end of the 19th century had created "...a group of people sharing a trapping subsistence, technology, and economy, largely sharing a Christian religion, and sharing some languages" (1977:37). They see a trend "to collapse all the functional ethnic differences" into a unique "bush culture" that contrasted mainly with the "settlement culture" (ibid.:37-38). This convergence extended into the linguistic sector, which had developed into "a pragmatic multilingualism" (ibid.:38), expedited by linguistic convergence of the four languages spoken in the region: Chipewyan, Cree, French, and English (Scollon 1979:32-35). They conclude that the distinctions between Chipewyan and Cree (and Métis and Europeans?) by this time "...appear to have been emblematic only" (Scollon and Scollon 1977:38).

Clearly, each original ethnic component has undergone considerable cultural change and convergence over time, yet Chipewyan and Cree ethnicity still persists in Fort Chipewyan as an important element of social organization. This paper will focus only on the Chipewyan and Cree ethnic inter-relations, following Barth (1969:32-33) that

> ...a drastic reduction of cultural differences between ethnic groups does not correlate in any simple way with a breakdown in the organizational relevance of ethnic identities, or a breakdown in boundary maintaining processes.

Chipewyan-Cree Ethnicity

The persistence of Chipewyan-Cree ethnic distinctiveness can be demonstrated through a consideration of (1) socio-territoriality, (2) marriage patterning, (3) legal status, (4) language, and (5) behavioral norms.

The most obvious ethnic indicator in Fort Chipewyan is family surname: some surnames are considered to be Cree, and others, Chipewyan. In other words, a child acquires the ethnic standing of the father (or mother, in instances where paternity is not acknowledged or relevant in the raising of the child). Since Indian surnames in this region date mostly from the 19th century and missionary emphasis on them, this practice of transmitting ethnicity along with family name may reflect European patrilineal custom, or it may build on an earlier Indian tradition.

Family groupings are historically associated with certain territories. The 20th century associations are quite firm and were probably established in

the previous century, though at this time I cannot suggest an approximate antiquity: Chipewyans inhabit (1) the Old Fort[4] and Jackfish Lake region and previously Big Point, in the Athabasca Delta, (2) the Athabasca River upstream from the Embarras to Fort MacKay, and (3) Birch River-western Lake Claire (now in WBNP). More recently, in the 1930s and '40s, the Birch River settlements were abandoned for relocation to the middle stretch of the Peace River in what is now WBNP. Crees occupy complementary areas: (1) the Fort Vermillon-Little Red River part of the Peace (western edge of WBNP), (2) the lower Peace and south to include the Lake Mamawi-Athabasca Delta-Embarras River area (the main part of the Peace-Athabasca Delta), and (4) until the 1930s and '40s many of the lakes north of Big Bay, on the Alberta side of Lake Athabasca.

The ecological-territorial transition paralleling the cultural convergence of the fur trade era seems to have been from a situation in which each group monopolized separate territories, competing for resources (early fur trade), to one in which they control discrete land use areas within the same general territory or "niche." Barth suggests that over time "...one would expect one such group to displace the other, or an accomodation involving an increasing complementarity and interdependence to develop" (1969:19020). In Fort Chipewyan, Indians were subjected in the 20th century to constraints that will be shown to have directed their "accomodation" to this situation.

Traditional bush settlements in these localities comprised kinship clusters of interrelated families. Each group had its own set of extra-regional ties: for example, Old Fort/Jackfish Lake Chipewyan were linked through travel and marriage to the Birch River/Peace River and Fort MacKay Chipewyans and especially to the Caribou-Eater Chipewyans at Fond du Lac, Saskatchewan. The Birch River Chipewyans were linked to Fort MacKay and Fort Smith Chipewyans. The Fort Vermillon/Little Red River and the Peace-Athabasca Delta Cree communities were linked to each other and to a certain extent to more southerly Cree groups, though they seem to have had a smaller extra-regional network than did the Chipewyans. Such extra-local ties supported a local group's sense of its own ethnicity.

Oblate genealogical records, recording births, baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals, date back directly to 1847 at Fort Chipewyan, when Father Taché visited the post, and through kinship reconstruction to the later 1700s.[5] Despite a long period of regional co-occupation, the first recorded

Chipewyan-Cree marriage occurred only in 1858. The total number of "primary" Chipewyan-Cree marriages from then till 1899 was 11, representing 9.8% of all marriages for those years.[6] Of these, most are concentrated in a few Cree families. They are not marriages at random, but seem to have been designed to create strategic alliances between the numerically weaker Cree and stronger Chipewyan, usually through Cree men marrying Chipewyan women. Such alliances were almost certainly aimed at facilitating peaceful relations and use of one another's territory. At the very least, they seem to have opened up the rich hunting and trapping area of the Birch River country to Cree use.

These initial marriages structured some "secondary" Chipewyan-Cree cross marriages. These appear often simply to have followed an apparently common practice of a person marrying back into the mother's group of kin and thus continuing an alliance.

In 1899 the socioterritorial reality of Chipewyan and Cree ethnicity was reified when Treaty No. 8 was signed by representatives of each group, now legal"bands" under the Indian Act. The signatories were firmly Chipewyan or Cree, judging from their names and family histories, and each probably represented a different concentration of people: for the Chipewyan, Alexandre Laviolette was nominated by the treaty commissioners (Fumoleau 1975:77) as the chief. He was from the Delta Chipewyan area. Chipewyan "headmen" were Julien Ratfat (Dzenk'a) and Sept Heezell (Hinzel), both from Birch River. The commissioners confirmed the Cree choice of chief of Justin Martin (Mekitin or Wiyakes) from the Lake Mamawi-Embarras region, with headmen Antoine Takaro and Thomas Gibbot, probably from the region of the lower Peace. The Chipewyans, in particular, were quite assertive during the negotiations proceeding the signing of the treaty; they put many demands to the treaty commissioners (Treaty No. 8, 1966).

While the creation of two bands at Fort Chipewyan reflected the social-ethnic situation, these rigid structures would cause later difficulties following the creation of Wood Buffalo National Park in 1922 (with annex in 1926). One of these difficulties would be a consequence of the treaty provision that each band was to select land to be reserved for its own use.

A more immediate consequence of the 1899 treaty may have been increased ethnic polarization. The percentage of primary cross marriages dropped to 3.3%, with a continued Cree male, Chipewyan female bias. Of interest here is a statement by Duchaussois, an Oblate historian, who wrote (1937:344, orig. 1923) that

> In the Indian school in which there are both Cree and Montagnais [Chipewyan] children, no greater penance can be inflicted on a

> little Cree boy than to put him next to a Montagnais girl, nothing more humiliating can be said to a little Cree girl than to tell her she will have to marry a Montagnais.

Enmity between the two groups persisted. One Cree-Métis man who grew up in the 1910s/1920s in Fort Chipewyan and vicinity talked about how Cree and Chipewyan children would fight one another: "That was our fun" (fieldnotes). More generally, Duchaussois asserted (1937:344, orig. 1923) that

> There is a great difference of character between the Dénés and the Crees....He [Cree] is less simple than the Montagnais, less fickle, and less easy to convince.
> ...
> If the Déné is timid and always ready to run away from that traditional "enemy" who is never seen, the Cree, on the contrary, is bold, overbearing, quarrelsome, and not unusually spoiling for a fight.

One should be careful about assessing the Chipewyans as "timid," however, since their public behavior, including that at the time of the treaty, seems to have been at times assertive and even aggressive on the part of some individuals.

Finally, the different languages continued to be spoken. The Scollons have domonstrated considerable linguistic convergence among the four regional languages. Despite this convergence, some evidence suggests that there was not complete Chipewyan-Cree bilingualism. Rather, only some individuals were bilingual. It is difficult to evaluate the degree of linguistic comprehension and use that marked a bilingual person if, as S. Scollon suggests, people in the community have a greater tolerance of lack of comprehension than do outside English speakers. She mentions, moreover, that the ability to speak the local languages is sometimes attributed to people who do not, in fact, have this ability (Scollon 1977:68). It is certain, however, that as recently as the early 1940s, many Chipewyans could not speak Cree, nor Crees, Chipewyan. For example, one Chipewyan woman who was married in 1942 to a Cree man said that before she married, she spoke only Chipewyan and understood very little Cree. It took three years before she felt she could speak Cree. Her husband understood Chipewyan, she said, but he could speak only Cree.[7] Cree is the language they use together.

I would suggest that the ethnic situation in the post-1899 period was analogous to Nagata's plural society, in which

> Interethnic relations...consist largely of a series of dyadic or polyadic interactions between members of one group and another with but minimal reference to any superordinate, or

> dominate, or neutral area and with few implications of gradual or eventual social...convergence [1974:332].

How, then, is the abrupt transformation of a large number of Chipewyans into legal Crees to be explained?

New Constraints: Wood Buffalo National Park and the Chipewyan Reserve[8]

The explanation lies in the consequences of three circumstances: first, the Peace-Athabasca Delta contained a herd of wood bison legally protected against all hunters since 1894; secondly, the 1899 treaty had promised to create Chipewyan and Cree reserves; and thirdly, after World War I, large numbers of outsiders, especially non-Native, moved into the area to hunt and trap.

Canada's desire to protect the wood bison from extermination was reflected in the provisions of the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act, passed by the federal government in 1894. This legislation prohibited the hunting of wood bison and established closed seasons for several animals, including game animals, fur-bearers, and birds. At least as early as 1911, there were suggestions that the bison range should be turned into a park in order to provide maximum bison protection by expelling the Indians who lived and hunted in the area. Not surprisingly, the Indians were most unhappy with these and later proposals for a park:

> At the time the sanctuary was first proposed, the Indians displayed considerable hostility to the suggestion that they should be deprived of their right to hunt and trap over such a large area of land, claiming that they would have to explore other more remote lands in the pursuit of their livelihood, and that it would mean a lapse of several years before they would be in a position of earning a living by trapping over a strange territory [letter from J. D. McLean, Dept. Supt.-Gen., to J. B. Harkin, Commissioner, 22 July 1920, RG 10 V. 4085 File 496,658 1A].

Among their reasons for objecting were promises made to them at treaty time in 1899 concerning their continued right to hunt, fish, and trap as freely as if they had never entered into treaty. They believed that the creation of a park would violate this promise, which never found its way into the written version of the treaty.

Following the first world war, pressure to create a park mounted due to the large number of outsiders, non-Native and Métis, who entered the area in the 1910s and especially the 1920s to trap, due both to high fur prices and to depressed economic circumstances for prairie farmers. Many of them were inexperienced and took pelts in any way they could; the non-Native trappers

in particular, having no long-term interest in the region, stripped the areas they trapped of all the fur-bearers and game and then moved on.[9]

The Indians bitterly resented the outside intruders. This pressure for resources was surely the reason behind a 1922 request for a reserve by Chief Justin Martin on behalf of the Cree band, prior to the establishment of the park later that same year, although almost certainly for an area south of the park area (north of the Peace River in 1922). The bands had not been willing to choose reserves when they took treaty in 1899, fearing that they would be restricted to them. Now they saw reserves as areas that could be closed to these rapacious outsiders. This initial request was apparently never acted upon.

The issue of whether or not the park should be closed to all hunters and trappers was still not decided when it was created on December 18, 1922. White trappers and all traders were definitely prohibited. These trappers moved to the east of the Slave River and south of the Peace. Eventually it was decided that Métis, over their strong protests and after allowing them to continue in the park for its first year, were to be disallowed access as well. Several Métis took treaty so as to gain park privileges. Meanwhile, the debate continued regarding the possibility of excluding the Indians, too, from the park at a time when "the Indians are coming into the Park in increasing numbers because the white man is excluded" (extract from Mr. Finnie's notes during his official visit to WBNP, 21 Dec. 1925, RG 85 V. 1213 File 400-2-3 pt. 1). It was becoming increasingly difficult for Indians, both Chipewyan and Cree, to cope with competition from outsiders, which may have contributed to the fact that Indians were never excluded from the park, despite this debate.

The Indians living in the Alberta portion of the park were subject to the closed seasons of the Alberta Game Regulations (letter from O. S. Finnie, Director, to J. A. McDougal, 18 June 1924, RG 85 V. 1213 File 400-2-3 pt. 1). They were not happy with the game regulations imposed on them, though the majority were considered to be generally law-abiding. However, there are several instances now and later of high status individuals, both Chipewyan and Cree, apparently deliberately violating certain game regulations on closed seasons which might be interpreted as a form of protest. Significantly, the Indians were not involved in the formulation of regulations which they might have found sensible and been willing to follow had they had a hand in creating them. They saw the imposition of the Alberta regulations as a violation of treaty promises.

The park was expanded on September 24, 1926, to include a great expanse of territory south of the Peace River, including the Embarras River, Birch River, and Lakes Claire and Mamawi. There was strong local resistance to this extension of the park. Government officials reassured Fort Chipewyan residents that their use of the park would not be restricted, but at the same time they continued to hope that it would one day be possible to turn the park into a true game sanctuary, with no Indian or other person allowed to hunt, trap, or fish. The park annex may be viewed as having been carved out of potential reserve lands. The park system created new protections and restrictions that were to alter Chipewyan-Cree relationships, as well as relationships among Chipewyans.

The initial and most important restriction imposed concerned access to the park. Following the creation of the old park in 1922, the matter of access by treaty Indians had been handled flexibly, resulting in many Indians moving into the park to avoid the competition for resources outside its boundaries. For the park annex, officials planned to limit the number of individuals who would have access to the park right from the start by establishing a permit system and setting a firm rule of eligibility: all hunters and trappers present in the park annex at the time it was declared part of the park would be able to obtain permits to enter the park - but only those individuals and their immediate families. Not only did this ruling allow several white trappers to remain in the park, but it also disallowed access to relatives of Natives who for one reason or another were hunting elsewhere that year. In effect, it split the Chipewyan band into two groups: the park Chipewyan and those without park access (Delta Chipewyan). The Crees were not put into this situation, since they were all apparently in the park in 1926 or could demonstrate a claim to such residence.

Both Cree and Chipewyan were fearful for their increasing lack of control over access to the resources on which their lives depended. The Chipewyan, possibly, were uneasy about this potential division in their band. The Chipewyan chief, who resided outside the park, had to have permission from park officials to visit band members inside the park. Both bands continued to press for the establishment of reserves, although these claims were complicated by the presence of an apparently inviolate national park. A 1926 petition protesting the extension of the park had stated that "for a number of years past, the Cree and Chipewyan Bands of Indians have endeavored to indue the Government to set aside a Hunting and Trapping Preserve, but, so far, without any tangible result" (petition from P. G. Mercredi, Fort Chipewyan, to Charles Stewart, Supt.-Gen.

of Indians Affairs, 6 May 1926, RG 85 V. 1213 Files 400-2-3 pt. 1). A letter from Indian Agent Gerald Card following the annual summer trip to pay treaty in 1928 informed the Indian Affairs Department that "the Chipewyan band were [sic] again insistent for a Hunting and Trapping reserve and wanted to know the cause of the long delay" (letter from G. Card, Ft. McMurray, to ? , DIA, 28 Aug. 1928, RG 10 V. 6731 File 420-1-4). The Department of Indian Affairs did make application to have two areas set aside as hunting and trapping reserves, one of which was to be for the Chipewyan Indians, located outside the park. However, the Department of Northern Administration wanted to link the creation of a reserve with the elimination of all hunting and trapping in the park.

Natives within the park surely felt that their fears were justified when in 1928 a hunter who had violated a game regulation had his permit cancelled. This event seems to have been the informal beginning of a policy of enforcing game regulations primarily by the threat of temporary or permanent expulsion from the park for transgressions, a serious threat indeed when one considers the competition outside the park. The situation worsened when Alberta moved to establish registered traplines in the 1941-42 season (Annual Report, Dept. of Lands and Mines Alberta 1943:64). If a trapper (and his family) were forced to leave the park for a violation of a regulation after that time, there was nowhere he could go, because trappers with park eligibility were denied access to non-park traplines. Applications for reinstatement of these trappers state that they were rendered destitute as a result of their punishment. Because they had no area in which to trap and hunting became problematic, they were essentially forced to rely on rations issued by the Indian Agent. This situation certainly contributed to efforts to obtain a reserve from which a hunter and his family could not be expelled.

Hunters and trappers who obeyed the park regulations, or who at least did not get caught in their violation, were better off economically than were Indians, primarily Chipewyans, outside the park. The restricted number of park trappers combined with park conservation measures resulted in higher animal populations, better individual fur yields, and better incomes for those with access to the park compared with those Chipewyans without such access. The park officials believed that the Indians saw the value of the regulations and cooperated with them. Horace Halcrow, who had investigated the possibility of a muskrat development scheme for the Athabasca Delta area, presented a contrary view, that "...in the great majority of cases they were giving no co-operation to the administration of the Park..." and were hostile to the regulations (letter from H. Halcrow, The Pas, to Hon. T. A. Crerar, Min. of Mines and Resources, 26 Oct. 1940,

p. 2, RG 85 V. 1214 File 400-2-3 pt. 3).

Moreover, the Indians were still afraid that "...in some future date the Government intends clearing them out of the area" (ibid.:3). They understood this plan to be the reason that they had not been able to obtain the reserve for which they had "...repeatedly asked..." (ibid.). Without a reserve, they lived in a condition of total insecurity, at the mercy of the park administration, which they distrusted.

The Chipewyan band did obtain a reserve in the Athabasca Delta outside the park, a process that began in 1937 when the federal government obtained a certificate of title to the surface rights of 49,600 acres of land from the provincial government. The land was officially made a reserve in 1954. Apparently, the amount of land involved was based on the total Chipewyan band population, even though many of the Chipewyans lived within the park. The very limited material available about the reserve creation does not indicate whether or not the park Chipewyan were involved in the process of obtaining this particular reserve, or whether the government simply assumed that they would never obtain a reserve in the park and so added their numbers to those of the Chipewyans resident outside the park, perhaps under the assumption that one day the park Chipewyans might leave the park and come to live on the reserve. Some evidence suggests that the Delta Chipewyan had not wanted a reserve, but rather a muskrat hunting and trapping preserve, still fearing that they might be forced to restrict their activities to the physical limits of a reserve. Further, the reserve was not large enough to support even those Chipewyans who did use it, primarily the members of the Old Fort - Jackfish Lake communities. Given these limitations and the conflict that developed between Indians within and outside the park, it is unlikely that the reserve Chipewyans would have welcomed an influx of Chipewyans from the park, and there is some evidence that suggests that they might have been disallowed access to it. For these reasons, it seems likely that the park Chipewyans were passive rather than active participants in acquiring this reserve, and they neither benefited from it nor saw it as a homeland. What the park Chipewyans wanted, of course, was a reserve in the area of the park.

The Chipewyan and Cree within the park responded to the establishment of the Chipewyan reserve and to the problems they felt they faced jointly within the park by deciding to join forces. Although the Indian Affairs files on this topic are closed, the new Indian Agent Jack Stewart reported in his Daily Journal that on June 12, 1944, he "Had a meeting of the Cree Band in office today. Talked over the Election System and also the reserve they have asked

for. Part of the Chipewyan band was also here and they put in an application for a transfer to the Cree Band." This transfer took place sometime later in 1944 or possibly early 1945. It seems clear that since the Chipewyan band had now obtained its total reserve allotment, the only action the park Chipewyan could take was to throw their lot in with the Cree, hoping that their united forces would finally enable them to acquire a reserve or reserves within the park boundaries, as well as justifying a claim for more reserve acreage due to having taken in the large number of Chipewyans. It appears that as a result of this change and of the unity of intersts imposed by the park situation, the Chipewyans and Crees were also ending their generations-old enmity and distinction between them through ideological changes as well as this final legal band transfer.

Interpretation

Certainly, the actions of the Chipewyans and Crees were expedient ones (cf. Nagata 1974:341). That is, ethnicity between 1922 and 1944 was clearly "...a symbolic system which may be activated by members of a group or its leaders as one of many strategic alternatives in the pursuit of individual or group goals" (Levy 1975:28). One chooses or manipulates one's ethnic status in order to accomplish certain desired goals, particularly "...to obtain the resources one needs to survive and to consume" (Bennett 1975:3).

In parallel fashion, the number of cross-marriages between 1927 and 1944 increased to 9.1%, still with a predominance of Cree male - Chipewyan female liaisons. Curiously, for 1944, the year of the actual band transfer, there are no marriages recorded, an extremely unusual circumstance for that period, which averaged 7.3 marriages per year for that 18 year period.

These actions by Chipewyans and Crees can be interpreted from a perspective other than expediency; that is, the idea that one's choice of ethnic group reflects also the desire to express either social distance or solidarity (Nagata 1974:340). Specifically, the band transfer may represent an "ethno-transformation," part of the process involving "...a breaking down of earlier loyalties and a merging of old symbols from diverse cultural patterns into a new and self-conscious ideological framework that glorifies and crystallizes the new collectivity" (Gonzalez 1975:120).

An instructive story involves an earlier switch in ethnic affiliation in which a Cree man deliberately decided to become a Chipewyan.[10] He was born sometime before 1853 (baptismal date) to a Cree couple. He followed the example of his older brother (the first known Cree-Chipewyan cross marriage) in marrying

a Chipewyan woman in 1876. Her sister later married a Delta Chipewyan man (1887) and probably moved after marriage to the delta area with her husband. The story went that the Cree and his family were starving in the big famine of 1891. They encountered some Crees - rightfully his own people - who would not share food with them. One version has it that these Crees made medicine against them, preventing them from obtaining food. Outraged, the Cree man vowed that they would all live as Chipewyans in the future, speaking only Chipewyan. In 1899, he asked that his family be registered with the Chipewyan band. Traditionally, he and his descendants were resident in the delta area, including both Big Point and Old Fort, as well as having married and been co-resident with the Fond du Lac Chipewyans. If, as Barth points out, a common ethnic status implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment (1969:15), the Crees who denied food to a starving Cree hunter and his family violated a basic Indian value about sharing food. The man's repudiation of his Creeness can be seen as a judgment on those Crees.

The situation following the creation of WBNP and the Chipewyan reserve was analogous: park and reserve Chipewyan were prevented from cooperating with one another, at least in terms of the sharing of food resources. Moreover, they were set in actual conflict with one another about access to hunting and trapping territories that had previously been at least in theory open to all. On the other hand, the situation of park Chipewyan and Cree became identical in terms of the constraints with which both had to deal. The alliances between them encouraged cooperation and sharing, a situation that should normally prevail within a common ethnic group. It was this change in partnership as well as the desire to obtain a reserve in the park that underlay the 1944 request to Indian Agent Jack Stewart to change band affiliation.

This assessment can be verified only by evaluating post-1944 ethnic relations, which is complicated by the fact that beginning about 1955, park Indians began abandoning residence in the bush settlements for residence in Fort Chipewyan itself, as well as at the mill site of Sweetgrass Landing in the park. Chipewyan-Cree ethnicity seems to be increasingly submerged in a more encompassing "Indian" identity, in opposition to non-Indians.

Nevertheless, some preliminary evaluations can be made. The first and to my mind the most significant is an apparent ideological shift: when asked about ethnic distinctions within the park today, people will offer comments to the effect that "we're all the same people." Similarly, I was told that the park boundaries followed a pre-existing ethnic boundary between Chipewyan and Cree groups. People will admit that ethnic distinctions did (do?) exist within the park, when pressed, but my experience has been that

they prefer to gloss over them. Significantly in this regard, most non-Natives in Fort Chipewyan, including some individuals who worked closely with both bands, were not aware of the pre-1944 ethnic situation. The 1944 band transfer is conspicuous by the lack of information about it within the community; it is not talked about, and many people who were affected by it know little or nothing about it.

I had expected originally that the band transfer would have been followed by an increase in the percentage of cross marriages as a way of consolidating the new band unity. This increase does not seem to have happened, possibly because marriages that were arranged, at least, seem to have been structured by the marriages of the parental generation as well as by ethnicity. An increase in the number of cross marriages was probably unnecessary, since the potential inter-ethnic ties already existed and could be activated through the extension of appropriate kinship terminology and statuses. Cross marriages did continue, however; in one instance in the early 1950s, a Cree mother opposed her daughter's marriage to a Chipewyan man, but the Cree father approved and arranged for the marriage. The move of people into town has had more impact on marriages, as young people are able to evade their parents' choices of spouses for them.

There have been changes in land use areas, although I cannot say with certainty that these developed in the post-1944 period. Instead, it seems more probable that these changes followed Cree-Chipewyan alliances stemming from the later 1800s, and that access to one another's territory simply increased over time. Today, land use is fixed by the assignment of hunter-trappers into group areas, a system that was introduced in 1949 over Indian objections. However, the group areas that were created followed the de facto land use situation of the 1940s, and most of these groups contain both Chipewyan and Cree members.

Linguistically, Cree has become the Indian lingua franca among the older people, supplanted by English among younger ones. Commonly today, all Chipewyans speak and understand Cree, but few Crees have comparable linguistic control of Chipewyan. The Chipewyans explain this situation, according to one non-Native informant, on the grounds that they are superior to the Crees, whereas the Crees' attitude is "Why bother?" (fieldnotes). In line with this new linguistic situation, when the Chipewyan chief talks in public (to a Native audience), he prefers talking in Cree, though he will mix in English and Chipewyan (fieldnotes). This same non-Native informants and his predecessor both suggested that there were still strong differences between Chipewyans and Crees in the 1960s and '70s, but it is difficult to evaluate their statements because they were largely un-

aware of the band transfer within the park. That is, to them all park Indians were Crees and contrasted with the Chipewyans. If their statements are valid, it would suggest that there was Chipewyan-Cree convergence to new behavioral norms within the park.

Finally, Delta Chipewyans, possibly due in part to their possession of a reserve, have been much slower than park Indians in relocating to Fort Chipewyan. Spatially, the residential differences can be seen in the fact that Delta Chipewyans, when they move into town, have tended to cluster at the east end of town, that end nearest the reserve and their traplines, while Crees and park Chipewyans (now Crees) cluster at the opposite end, the end nearest the park. Does this pattern reflect ethnicity or convenience? It may indicate, at the least, the common interests that led the park Chipewyans to turn Cree in 1944 and that still tend to channel their political, social, and economic maneuverings in the 1970s.

Notes

[1]Field investigations in Fort Chipewyan lasted for seven months in 1977 and one month in 1978. Familiarity with the community and with Chipewyan history dates back to 1968. Further archival research was undertaken in 1978 in the Oblate Provincial House and the WBNP headquarters, both in Fort Smith, in the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and in the Public Archives of Canada. The research was funded by a 1977 Department of Anthropology summer bursary (Univ. of Alberta) and by two Boreal Institute Research Grants, one awarded in 1975 and the other awarded to Dr. A. D. Fisher, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Alberta. I would like to thank Ron Scollon for reading an earlier draft of this paper.

[2]Because one consequence of the early fur trade was a great amount of conflict between Chipewyans and Crees, it is difficult to hypothesize about their inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations before the onset of the fur trade era.

[3]This significant difference in adaptive strategy was recognized in the southwestern part of the Chipewyan territory by a terminological distinction in reference to them: those Déné who remained in the transitional boreal forest region and continued to follow the caribou were called "Caribou-eaters" (Ethen eldeli). Those who moved into the true boreal forest became the "Chipewyan"; the name derives from a Cree term.

[4]Fort Chipewyan was located originally on the south shore of Lake Athabasca. It was relocated to its present location in the 1790s.

[5]A tremendous debt is owed to Father Picard, O.M.I., who did most of these early reconstructions during the years he spent at Fort Chipewyan, Fond du Lac, and Black Lake. He spent many hours in 1977 sharing with me his immense personal knowledge of early Fort Chipewyan family relationships. Sadly, he died in 1978.

Father Mousseau of the Oblate Provincial House has continued this arduous work of compiling family histories for Forts Chipewyan, Fitzgerald, and Smith. He has generously made these records available to me.

[6]By a "primary" Chipewyan-Cree marriage I mean one between two individuals each of whom is ethnically homogeneous. A "secondary" cross marriage is one between two individuals, at least one of whom is the offspring of a Chipewyan-Cree marriage.

[7]This man had a Chipewyan grandmother. As well, he is a member of that Cree group that had arranged several marriages with Chipewyans from various areas. There may well have been several Chipewyan women resident in his settlement, with possibly other Chipewyan relatives co-resident from time to time. Nevertheless, he spoke only Cree.

[8]This analysis was prepared for the Edmonton Chapter of the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada: "The Cree Band Land Entitlement in Wood Buffalo National Park: History and Issues," 26 March 1979.

[9]The Lac La Biche Métis who moved to the Fort Chipewyan region at this time formed part of this wave of immigration and were initially resented. At least one group of these Métis already had a marital link with local Chipewyan, however, and subsequently they settled in the region, especially at Big Point and along the Slave River, hunting and trapping to the east and north of Lake Athabasca.

[10]I was introduced to this story in 1977 by Ron and Suzie Scollon, who were just finishing nine months of research in Fort Chipewyan. Other versions were told me by Father Picard and by Father Cueff, currently the resident priest in Fort Chipewyan.

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